Our Western Frontier

OF

INDIA

LONDON:
WATERLOW BROS. & LAYTON,
24, BIRCHIN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

1886.

I.—INTRODUCTO

There is nothing that strikes anyone who is . . . acquainted, to however slight a degree, with the conditions of existence of the various races inhabiting the wild and barren country intervening between our Indian frontier and that of Persia, more than the persistent way in which European politicians and geographers endeavour to group these races under two distinct nationalities, and to assign to them as such fixed territorial abodes We hear them talk of Beloochistan and Affghanistan as though the districts thus designated were the exclusive abode of two nationalities entirely distinct from one another, but homogeneous amongst themselves; almost as we hear the more grossly ill-informed amongst the British public. talk of the inhabitants of the Peninsula of Hindustan as "Indians," thereby classing all the varied races of a country almost as big as Europe, and containing quite as many distinct nationalities under a designation which they apply with equal readiness to the aborigines of North America, and the inhabitants of the Cannibal Islands. To endeavour to explain the ridiculous misapplication of this term as applied to a member of any one of the numerous distinct races, inhabiting the country of Hindustan is too comprehensive a subject to be attempted in connection with any other matter, my object at present being merely to point out the erroneous notions into which our European ideas have led us as regards the regions, we have designated respectively as Beloochistan and Affghanistan, and the population found therein

particularly as they affect our frontier policy, and mode of treatment of the difficulties with which we are now there beset.

The terms Affghanistan and Beloochistan, as territorial designations applied to particular tracts of country, may indeed be considered arbitrary—if not more than that, absolutely fictitious, for they do not designate any country known to the inhabitants of it themselves by such a title; they are rather terms which we have adopted from motives of convenience; and because, according to our European ideas, each race or collection of races, speaking a common or kindred tongues, ought to inhabit a region with fixed boundaries, and be united under a distinct national representative. Such, however, is not the case with the motley variety of nationalities that inhabit the regions in question, the *débris* of successive social upheavals left stranded in these inhospitable parts, for the reason that there alone they have found a refuge, the possession of which no invader has found it worth while to dispute with them; they still exist, with no views, and but few interests in common. The east or the west of these regions—Persia or Hindustan—has always been the goal of the conquering hordes which have issued whether from Central Asia or from Arabia, and in Beloochistan and Affghanistan are found the remnants of the aboriginal races of the countries which they have overran in their course mixed with waifs and strays of their conquerors, just as in the wildest and most mountainous parts of India, are now alone found the survivors of the aboriginal inhabitants of that country who have in these inhospitable recesses, found a refuge which has preserved to them their individuality through centuries, in the course of which the more exposed inhabitants of the plains, have been conquered over and over again till hardly a trace of their ultimate origin can be found amongst them.

The barren and mountainous districts bordering our Western frontier of India resemble the beach of the sea at high-water mark, nationalities from all quarters of the Asiatic world are there found stranded; of some of them, such as of the Arabs, Moguls and tribes of Persian descent, it is comparatively easy to trace the origin, but of the majority it is lost in obscurity.

Of the variety of the origin of these races no greater proof could be adduced than the constitution of the languages, or rather dialects spoken amongst them, which are nothing but compounds of what appears an infinite variety of tongues; in them are alike to be found words purely Sanscrit in their origin, and others purely Arabic, whilst many come even direct from the Hebrew, and the majority from various intermediary sources, the whole being linked together by the special idiomatic forms of speech which have found their origin on the common meeting-ground where all these waifs have made their home.

To arrive at a sufficient comprehension of the ethnographical intricacies to be encountered in a study of the nationalities inhabiting these regions it is necessary first to consider the physical peculiarities of the homes in which they are found, and particularly the relative position of the same as regards India, for India has been the tempting bait which has led successive invading hosts through these poverty-stricken districts, and given them the courage to struggle through all the difficulties and privations which their passage has brought upon them, and it is only the fact of their forming the sole means of approach to India from the west that has now brought these regions so prominently before the notice of civilized nations.

For this purpose we may look upon Hindustan as a vast park or garden completely protected towards the north by

an insurmountable wall, and shut in towards the west—by which alone lies any means of approach to it—by a tangled mass of rocks and ravines.

The whole of the northern portion of Hindustan may be said to constitute a sort of depressed plain in the Asiatic landscape, for though abounding in ranges of hills that rise to a considerable height, the greater part of its surface is more or less plain in its nature, and seldom rises to a greater elevation than that of about 2,000 feet above the sea level; it is owing to this characteristic, namely, the general uniformity of its surface, coupled with the abundance of its water supply, that its agricultural wealth is mainly due.

This productive basin is bounded on the north and west by ranges of mountains constituting the margins of vast table-lands which, several thousand feet higher than the average level of the surface of the Indian Peninsula, stretch far away towards the north and west. As regards the ranges which form the boundary towards the north of India these rise gradually, by successive leaps, as it where, from low hills, which, at a distance of from 50 to 150 miles from the Ganges, start out of the dead level plains, constituting the valley of this river, to the towering heights of the Himalayas, which rise to an altitude of from 25,000 to 28,000 feet above the sea-level, and stretch in an unbroken and impenetrable barrier from beyond Calcutta to Peshawur, a barrier such as has ever effectually prevented any ingress from this quarter to the fertile districts lying to its south. With these mountains, however, we are not now further concerned than in so far as they offer a contrast to those in which our present interest lies, namely the mountainous district bounding the western frontier of India. In this direction the mountain ranges, instead of rising gradually out of the plains which here constitute the valley of the Indus,

spring up in most cases almost abruptly to a height of from 4,000 to 10,000 feet or more. On the farther side of these precipitous ranges extend endless stretches of table lands, which rise to their greatest height towards the north, and descend gradually towards the south and west. The mountains that thus terminate towards the west the plains of Hindustan differ entirely in all their physical characteristics from the Himalayan ranges. These latter, owing to the combined effects of the S.W. and S.E. monsoons, whose warm moisture-laden atmosphere is arrested by their snowy tops, to descend in condensed torrents of rain upon their bases and the plains below—abound with vast forests and every species of vegetation in its most luxuriant form; whilst their slopes are covered with endless stretches of wood-land and pasture, the valleys which intersect them—filled with deep, rich soil, the detritus of centuries of decayed vegetable matter washed down by the periodical rains from the slopes above—produce crops of the most extraordinary abundance. How different from this is the picture presented by the mountain ranges to the west of the Indus, these do not rise to a height sufficient to attract the monsoon clouds, and hence derive no benefit from their favouring influences, the rainfall amongst them is in consequence extremely limited, and their summits and sides present nothing but barren and rugged slopes, stripped by centuries of storms and tempests of every vestige of soil; in place of the magnificent forests of pine and oak intermingled with chestnut, ash and the lovely rhododendron which clothe the southern slopes of the Himalayas, here nothing but rocky wastes meet the eye, unrelieved by the presence of any further vegetation than that presented by a few gnarled and stunted cypresses or firs, and other trees of a similar kind, whose hardy nature has enabled them to struggle through every difficulty there offered them;

while the valleys and plains below, though consisting in many places of very productive soil, remain for the most part barren wastes, owing to the deficiency of an adequate supply of water, without which the intrinsic qualities of any soil, however good, are absolutely worthless, for as contrasted with the valleys of the Himalayas, which abound in streams replenished from year to year by the rainy seasons, and the annual melting of the snows, which latter form, as it were, a gigantic natural reservoir, the contents of which percolate through every mountain side, the plateau of Beloochistan and Affghanistan are either absolutely waterless or so inadequately supplied with this requisite as to render but a very small proportion of their surface available for the purposes of cultivation.

The general characteristics of the landscape when one has surmounted the rugged barrier which opposes the ingress into these regions from the direction of India, may be described as a vast plateau intersected with innumerable rocky ridges rising to an height of from 1,000 to 6,000 feet above it, the intervals between which form valleys or basins, or even extensive plains according to their degree. These latter portions of the country are alone susceptible of cultivation, and that only to the extent admitted by the limited amount of water available for this purpose, for it cannot be too clearly understood that the landscape in these regions consists mainly of rocky mountains and more or less unculturable deserts; the amount of culturable land, even in the more favoured localities, bearing but a very small proportion to the extent that is absolutely insusceptible of cultivation; this, as I have explained, is not so much owing to the actual want of land capable under more favourable influences of producing crops, as to the deficiency of streams or springs and the scantiness of the annual rainfall. There being here no regular seasons

of rain as in India, such rainfall as does occur is both scanty and limited as regards the area affected by it, for it rarely extends beyond the mountain ranges, or their immediate neighbourhood. Added to these natural disadvantages of its physical characteristics, the climate of these regions is severe in the extreme. Owing to the bareness of the landscape and the general absence of vegetation, there is but little modification to be found between the extremes of heat and cold, the heat is in consequence out of all proportion with the altitude of these regions above the sea level, and the cold is equally out of all proportion with both their altitude and latitude; while owing to the facility with which the bare surfaces of the ground, part byradiation with the heat they may have absorbed, the rapidity with which these extremes follow one another seems almost incredible,—a temperature of 110 degrees or more, Fahrenheit, by day may be succeeded by one of 50 degrees by night, or even in case of a trifling shower of rain. It may, indeed, be said that during the hot season the heat here is almost as great, and, owing to the bareness of the soil and the clearness of the atmosphere, quite as trying as that of most parts of India—the only advantage which it possesses over the latter being that the nights are generally cool, frequently too much so, as I have said, to be either healthy or pleasant. In the cold season, on the other hand, though the temperature does not, perhaps, actually go down many degrees below freezing-point, the air when in motion, there being nothing to obstruct its force, is more piercingly cold in its effect than can be imagined without personal experience, while the extreme scarcity of any sort of fuel makes the severity of the climate in this respect all the more difficult to contend with.

It can be easily imagined from this description that these countries present but little inducement to a foreign

invader to attempt their annexation, or even temporary occupation—the only occasion, indeed, of their ever having been entered by a foreign force is owing to their constituting the only means of approach to the fertile plains of India—whilst the very fact of their inaccessibility and barrenness has rendered them favourable places of refuge to the victims of successive invasions of the more favoured countries to their west.

Instead, then, of looking upon the inhabitants of these regions as constituting two distinct nationalities, and endeavouring to classify them under the generic terms of Beloochee and Affghan we should rather consider them as composed of a number of separate units, the result of successive invasions and consequent expulsions of the aboriginal population from the countries further west, scattered amongst whom the Belooches and Affghans are in the main in the preponderance. As to the origin of these two races, the only thing certain about it is that it must have been absolutely distinct, for they differ entirely in every characteristic of feature and character; the Affghans claim to be descendants of the Jews, and their language certainly point to a western origin, while the Belooches appear to have no tradition even amongst them as to the region from whence their ancestors came, or the circumstances under which they settled in the districts in which their descendants are now found. It is with equal incorrectness, then, that we would endeavour to apply the terms Beloochistan and Affghanistan to any clearly defined tracts of country or those of Beloochee and Affghan as the general distinctive titles of the races inhabiting these tracts. The term Beloochistan may indeed with a certain degree of reason be applied to the tract thus designated. for throughout it are found a variety of races who speak different dialects of a common language, namely, Beloochee; though interspersed with these dwell large

numbers of members of tribes distinct from the Beloochee-speaking inhabitants, who acknowledge no connection whatever with them, and speak entirely different languages. The term Affghanistan, however, as applied to the entire region to which we give it, is completely out of place, for in many parts of this region the Affghans hardly constitute a bare majority, and in others are not found at all; in any case they are scattered about in such a hap-hazard way in the region thus designated, and so intermingled with races of a different origin that it is almost impossible to define any particular portion of it as being their exclusive abode, and thus entitled to the special designation of Affghanistan, or the "abode of the Affghans." If any part could, with justice, lay claim to this title it would be the area included between Peshawur, Cabul, Bamian, Candahar and Quetta, which constitutes the head-quarters of the Affghan population, though, even here, this is much mixed with various tribes of foreign origin; in the remaining portion the Affghan population is either very much in the minority or settled in detached and isolated districts, and so blended with races of entirely distinct nationalities that it would be quite a misnomer to apply to the districts they are found in any term distinguishing it as the exclusive abode of the Affghans.

II.—BELOOCHISTAN.

If by the term Beloochistan we mean to designate a particular tract of country comprehending within its limits all the districts where the Beloochee language or a cognate dialect is spoken, the area thus designated would be so irregular in its outline, and so dovetailed into neighbouring districts, where languages entirely distinct from Beloochee are the current medium of intercourse of the population, that it would be impossible to lay i vn

distinctly on any map, of however large a scale. Such a tract, moreover, would include within its boundaries a number of tribes who not only lay no claim to be called by the title of Beloochee, but who, on being questioned upon the subject, would distinctly disavow any such claim, and disown all connection with the tribe whose special designation it is.

Descending from the north, the first Beloochee-speaking tribe which we come across is that of the Bozdars, who inhabit a narrow strip of mountainous country between Affghanistan and the Punjaub, next come the Bugtees, then the Marris inhabiting the mountains north and west of Sibi, the present terminus of the Candahar State Railway; all these three tribes, though speaking a common tongue, disown any sort of connection with one another, and live in a state of perpetual feud amongst themselves. Next to these comes an interval occupied by an utterly distinct race—namely, that of the Brahoes, whose language has not even the slightest resemblance to any one of those spoken around them; where they came from is an utter mystery. They compose a very numerous tribe, and the district occupied by them extends from the Bolan Pass to Quetta towards the west, and to Khelat towards the south. They are of two categories, as it were, the migratory Brahoes and the sedentary Brahoes. The former are essentially a pastoral community, their entire property consisting of immense herds of sheep, goats and camels. In these latter consist their main wealth, for they are the principal proprietors of these invaluable animals in these parts, and consequently have almost a monopoly of the carrying trade between the Sind frontier and Quetta and Khelat. They build no villages, but live in tents formed by coarse rugs made of camels' or goats' hair, and cultivate only just enough ground to supply themselves from time to

time with a little coarse grain. The cold season they spend on the plains at the foot of the Bolan Pass, and as soon as the weather there begins to get hot, they move up this Pass to the plateaux in the immediate neighbourhood of its summit. The sedentary Brahoes inhabit the comparatively fertile districts between the Bolan Pass and Khelat, where they are found settled in numerous villages. South of these again come a variety of tribes more or less of Persian origin, with no special characteristic about them except that they speak several debased dialects of Beloochee: these extend from Khelat down to Mekran upon the coast of the Persian Gulf

The true Beloochee element according to our acceptation of the term, that is the aggregate of the tribes speaking the Beloochee language- would include the Bozdars, the Bugtees, the Marris, and the proper Beloochee--according to the native acceptation of the term, that is, the Rind Beloochee or Beloochee of the plains of Kutchi and the mountains bordering these on the south and east. The Brahoes, who constitute, as I have shewn, a very important element in the population of these parts, would, if questioned, indignantly deny their connection with any Belooch tribe, with all and each of whom they have from time immemorial lived on terms of the bitterest hostility.

From this it will be seen that the population of a great part of the region called by us Beloochistan—so far from being even a Beloochee-speaking population—speak a language utterly and entirely removed from this tongue, and that this population, moreover, inhabits the neighbourhood of the town which we have always credited with being the capital of our Beloochistan. Such a thing as a king or sovereign of Beloochistan does not exist. The Khan of Khelat is only one of the more powerful chiefs in these districts, and his influence over any portion of

the various tribes inhabiting the territories which we have assumed to belong to him, is of so vague and shadowy a description that it in reality amounts to nothing at all; indeed, till within a few years, he was unable to maintain any sort of supremacy over the tribe to which he belongs himself—namely, that of the Brahoes, with the migratory section of which he had for years been on terms of hostility; in the course of which, so far from being able to hold his own, he had been reduced to such straits that it was nothing but the arrival of our Mission in his country in 1874 which saved him from total destruction. The greater part, indeed, of the tribes inhabiting this region would emphatically deny any claim on the part of the Khan of Khelat to a supremacy over them, and the only answer they would give to any suggestion on his part of such a claim, would be to recommend him to come and try to enforce it. The influence of the Khan of Khelat may be said to extend no further than over the weaker tribes in his own immediate neighbourhood; and this influence is only owing to the fact that, whereas the ordinary Beloochee is a man who despises any sort of commercial transaction, and considers the only honourable mode of gaining a living to be by the plunder of the baser and more sordid souls engaged in commerce and agriculture, the immediate dependants of the Khan of Khelat are essentially peaceful in their habits, and commercial in their tastes—he is thus enabled to extract from the settled portion of them sufficient revenue to enable him to entertain a sort of standing army; that is to say, a couple of thousand of cut-throat ruffians, whom it was his habit to let loose from time to time upon such of his neighbours or dependants as were unable to retaliate, with a view to asserting his position amongst them, or replenishing his exchequer by extracting black mail. Till recently, indeed, there was no

may be adopted by us to denote the special home of th Affghans, but in that case it could only, as has been sa with any justice be applied to the area, included withi lines drawn connecting Peshawur, Bamian, Candahar, o perhaps Girishk, and Quetta, though even in this there is a very large proportion of population entirely distinct from, and for a great part at perpetual feud with that of the Affghans. Beyond these limits the Affghan tribes are so closely intermingled with tribes belonging to the neighbouring races, such as Beloochees, Persians, and Turcomans, that it would be impossible to define any particular extent of country, as belonging to Affghanistan, Beloochistan, Persia, or Turkestan, respectively, if by these terms it be intended to imply that the population of such a tract is strictly Affghan, Belooch, Persia, or Turcoman, as the case may be, in its origin

Another point that adds much to the difficulty and perplexity of defining the territories belonging to these respective nationalities, is that a very large proportion of the population of each of them are nomads, and their sole means of livelihood being their flocks and herds, spend their lives in wandering about in search of pasturage for the same.

Too much stress cannot be laid upon the prevalence of this characteristic amongst the border tribes of these countries, as by it to a great extent is to be explained the difficulties which present themselves in laying down distinct territorial boundaries in districts where a great part of the population is more or less incessantly on the move. The region which we have termed Affghanistan is, as I have said, essentially one of rocky mountains and barren plains; but, bare of all vegetation as the landscape in most places appears, there still exists a considerable growth of a very nutritious herbage amongst the stones and dust which constitute the leading characteristics

the surface of the ground. This growth is very scattered, and hardly apparent to the eye, and the sight of flocks of sheep and herds of cattle in consequence grazing upon these unpromising sites has been the occasion of many a jesting remark on the part of Europeans strange to the country, as to the powers of digestion of these animals who appeared to them to keep themselves in wonderfully good condition upon a diet which, as far as appearances went, consisted of little else but sticks, and stones, and dust; but, as I have said, amongst these sticks, and stones, and dust exists a certain proportion of pasturage which, though it may require a little more exercise on the part of the animals to which it affords a sustenance to obtain it, than would be required of a Southdown sheep or a Herefordshire bullock, still, when found, appears to provide a diet admirably suited to the constitutions of the animals that feed upon it, for as good mutton may be obtained from the flesh of a sheep bred in these parts as from that of any English sheep.

It is thus only in the more favoured spots where a sufficient supply of water is obtainable for the irrigation of the land and the cultivation of crops, that a settled population is to be found, while a very large proportion of the inhabitants, being pastoral in their habits, are perpetually on the move in search of the more favourable spots wherein to graze the flocks and herds which constitute their sole wealth and means of livelihood. As I have shewn in the case of the Brahnis—a tribe inhabiting a portion of Beloochistan—the annual migrations of this tribe extend to a distance of over 100 miles, were there then any such term in existence as that of Brahnistan, or the land of the Brahnis, how would it be possible to define its limits since the homes of the individual members of the tribe alternate, according to the season of the year, between regions more than 100 miles apart?

And this only an illustration of what is a very comm[on] state of things, particularly in the region to the west [of] the Helmund, where the population mainly consists o[f] tribes all more or less nomadic in their habits As long a[s] these tribes are more or less of the same origin, the out side world is in no way interested in the movements that take place amongst them, but where tribes of one particular origin border others of a different one, and it is sought to separate them by a hard and fast line of demarcation, it is then found how almost impossible it is to assign any definite limits of the territories that are to belong to each respective nationality, for the very district which—in the case of the border lands of Affghanistan—may be to-day in the occupation of a tribe of Affghan origin, and so entitled to be considered as constituting a portion of Affghanistan, or the land of the Affghans, may in a month or two's time be found in the occupation of a tribe of Belooch, Persian, or Turcoman descent, and thus equally entitled to be considered a portion of Beloochistan, Persia, or Turkestan, as the case may be

The truth is that in these uncivilized regions all territorial limits are very vaguely defined, particularly where members of distinct nationalities, and of nomadic habits come in contact with one another The right of the sword being the only one recognized, any particularly favourable extent of pasturage becomes, for the time being—that is, for as long as it suits their purpose—the property of the tribe which can muster the largest number of fighting men.

To attempt, therefore, in such regions to lay down, by the aid of Theodolites and chains, and boundary-marks, an absolute line of demarcation, is like drawing a line on the sands of the desert, or on the sea-shore below high-water mark; the first gust of wind that comes, or the returning tide, will efface it, so that not a vestige of it

will be seen. The only line of demarcation from which we have any right to expect any permanence, in such shifting sands would be that represented by a cordon of European outposts, and however much we may endeavour to stave off, for the time being, the difficulty by means of pillars and boundary marks, there is but little doubt that no permanent solution of it will ever be arrived at till we have thus distinctly marked out by a living line of demarcation, the sphere within which we are resolved at all costs, that our own influence should be supreme.

IV.—THE AFFGHANS.

So much for the difficulties to be encountered in defining the particular limits of the districts known to us under the comprehensive designation of Affghanistan, on the supposition that they constitute the special or exclusive abode of a distinct nationality, a term unknown to the inhabitants themselves of these districts, who distinguish them by their respective individual designations as Khorassan, Cabul, Ghuznee, Balkh, &c., &c. Vague, however, as appear to be the limits of the tract of country thus named by us, still vaguer seem the connecting links between the various tribes constituting its inhabitants, whom we have endeavoured to classify under the collective title of Affghans, which is a term but little known even to the very tribes of the particular origin which we intend to designate by its application, who distinguish themselves by the title of Pathans, and it is by this name that they are known throughout Persia, India, and Central Asia. The tribes of Pathan origin, as has been pointed out, by no means form the exclusive population even of the districts which may be considered to form, as it were, their headquarters; for even here, intermingled with

them, is found a considerable sprinkling of tribes o Persian or Mogul descent. Still, as they constitute th majority amongst these, and are the dominant race in these parts, it is with their characteristics and social condition that we are mainly interested. The barren and mountainous region of Affghanistan has from time immemorial afforded a refuge to the inhabitants of the countries further west in the course of the successive tides of invasion which have flooded these, whether from the south, as in the case of the Arabs, or from the north, as in the case of the Turks and Moguls, for its poverty and inaccessibility—the very features which have rendered our experiences of the country so unsatisfactory in their results—have always proved an ample protection against the designs of the most enterprising invaders, who have found as a rule even the temporary occupation of the more favourable districts, an undertaking almost beyond their powers There is no doubt that the Pathans are a tribe of western origin, and took up their abode in the regions in which we now find them as refugees from the successful invasion of their own homes, but their origin is completely lost in obscurity, and it is difficult to make even any suggestion as to the immediate cause of their emigration, they claim themselves to be of Hebrew descent, and certain words in their language, which is more or less derived from the Pehlavi are intimately connected with the Hebrew, and would thus appear to give some shew of reason to their claim to a connection with this race; however this may be, they constitute the majority of the inhabitants, and speak a variety of dialects of a common language. This similarity of language, however, constitutes locally no bond of union between the members of the various tribes of this race, for they are divided into numerous clans, each with entirely distinct customs and interests.

elements of disunion amongst these various tribes are augmented a hundred-fold by the treacherous, ferocious and vindictive disposition which is the special characteristic of the Affghan portion of them, amongst whom any injury sustained by an individual member of a tribe or even section of a tribe may be the occasion of a feud between the two communities which may last for generations. Cases from time to time occur in which, in consequence of a feud of this description, the weaker family or tribe has been entirely extirpated—to which a parallel may be found in the famous Massacre of Glencoe—but as a rule the feud does not terminate thus abruptly, either family or tribe contents itself with assassinating a member of the tribe it is at feud with whenever it can do so without much risk, or with raiding into the territory belonging to it, whenever a favourable opportunity occurs. Amidst all these conflicting interests and distracting feuds the only point, indeed, at which any sort of cohesion is to be found amongst the motley variety of nationalities inhabiting these districts, is when, descending the scale, we arrive at the unit of sub-division amongst them, and that is a household or collection of households forming a section of a tribe, while the only common meeting-ground is, among the tribes of Affghan origin, a fanatical devotion to the Mahommedan religion. It appears, then, that in this country we have no distinct nationality to deal with, but rather an infinite number of social units each with more or less different customs and diverging interests, and having but little in common but their suspicion and hatred of a foreigner in general, and an infidel in particular.

The disunited condition of the various tribes constituting the Affghan population of these regions has always been a subject of regret and lamentation to the more patriotic and intelligent amongst them who have had for...

a superior skill and ability Their greed of money is beyond all description, and there is no atrocity of which they are not capable for a sufficient bribe, but as may be imagined from their fickle and treacherous nature to persist in a system of bribing, or as we term it euphemistically subsidizing such a people is like pouring water into a sieve, for the recipient only considers himself bound by such a bribe in so far as it offers the prospect of another, or until the possibility presents itself of obtaining such an inducement from another party; even then he would endeavour secretly to extract such bribes from both parties, and would consider the achievement of such a purpose the acme of diplomatic skill; eventually when no longer able to continue it, throwing in his lot—only for the time, however, until something better turned up—with the one that promised best

The characteristic qualities of the Affghan population may then be described as those of a fanatical devotion to the Mahommedan religion, and a reckless courage and a love of independence, coupled with the most ferocious vindictiveness and sordid greed and duplicity. Their love of independence and fanatical hatred of a foreigner and infidel form the great obstacle to our dealing with them while their quarrelsomeness and cupidity are qualities which give us field to work upon

V.—THE AMIR OF CABUL.

As regards the relative position of the Amir of Cabul towards the various tribes over which he is supposed to exercise a nominal suzeranity, we shall again find an excellent analogy to this in the mutual relations existing between the kings of Scotland and the turbulent Highland clans over whom they claimed to exercise a

there exists no such an analogy to a European Sovereign, and it is rather our European ideas as to what would be a proper state of things than a correct appreciation of the state of things actually existing, which has led us into the error of regarding the Amir of Cabul as the personal ruler of a distinct nationality. The impressions thus originated have indeed been apparently confirmed by the fact, that in our several invasions of the country, we have found ourselves opposed by what appeared to us the mass of the population united under the direction of a distinct ruler, but such a state of things exists only in our imagination, and the appearance that led to this apparent confirmation of our impressions is only owing to the fact that, however separated by individual dissensions and private feuds, there is one point on which the conflicting interests of all these tribes, which constitute the most fanatical class of Mahommedans in the world—would always agree, and that is for the exclusion from the common country of an infidel For such a purpose they would always rise *en masse*, and naturally rally round the chief of the most powerful tribe amongst them; the moment, however, that the intruder has been repulsed, all appearance of cohesion or organization disappears, and the Amir of Cabul, who has apparently to us been the director of an organized national opposition to our ingress, becomes nothing more than what he was before, previous to the development of the magnetic influence of fanaticism which caused all the various atoms constituting collectively the Affghan population to range themselves round him, namely, the chief of a very powerful tribe whose influence amongst, or supremacy over, his neighbours depends almost entirely upon the state of his exchequer, and his personal popularity amongst his own immediate adherents. In all our measures for the protection of our western frontier

of India, the greatest stumbling-block that we have encountered, has been this lack of cohesion amongst the different nationalities, inhabiting the adjacent districts, and our policy has consequently been naturally to remedy it by supporting and exalting the most influential chieftain amongst the various tribes, constituting these nationalities with a view to treating with them subsequently as their national representatives; but in the case of the Affghan tribes this aim has always been thwarted by the invincible suspicion and aversion entertained by this independent and fanatical race towards an infidel. So long as we have limited our support to our would-be national representative to the payment of subsidies and supply of arms and ammunition, the position and prestige of the recipient of these favours amongst his fellow-countrymen has been improved and strengthened in consequence to the utmost extent of our anticipations, and that not only on account of the material assistance thus derived, but from the fact that to a devout Mussulman to bleed the infidel of these requisites upon every possible pretext would always appear a right and fitting procedure, and the more successful the operation, the higher would be the opinion entertained by all "true believers" of the orthodoxy and ability of the operator; but as often as we have attempted to further our object by a personal intervention in the politics of the country, and an actual resort to force of arms, our appeal to such a measure has been followed by the most unfortunate consequences both for our own interests and for those of the particular *protégé* on whose behalf we have interfered, or whom we have subsequently selected for support, for it has then become apparent that so great is the aversion of the Mahommedan population of these parts to the intrusion of an infidel that the mere fact of his having availed himself of our assistance has effectually ruined in the estimation

of his fellow-countrymen, our candidate for sovereignty, so much so that he has lost all hold upon even his own immediate adherents in consequence, and so upon the withdrawal of our armed support he has forthwith either disappeared or been removed, and the whole country has in an instant reverted to even a more disorganized and distracted condition than before

VI.—AFFGHANISTAN.

As regards the physical characteristics and natural resources of the region of Afghanistan, too much attention cannot be paid to the fact that even under its more favourable aspects, it is a country which can offer but little commercial inducement for its occupation Let it be remembered that it is essentially a land of stony mountains and sandy plains, in most parts of which, works of agriculture are quite impossible, and in others only carried on by dint of the most persevering labour on the part of the inhabitants. The valleys, indeed, which intersect the mountain ranges, and are watered by the streams issuing from their sides, are the only portions really susceptible of cultivation to any appreciable degree, for, as I have explained, the rainfall in these countries is very precarious, and no conjecture can, as a rule, be formed as to the period of its occurrence; when it does occur, moreover, it is only partial, and is principally confined to the neighbourhood of the mountain ranges. The general character of the country may thus be said to be of so poor and unproductive a nature as to be unable to provide a sufficient sustenance even for the scanty population which is indigenous to it, and does not, I believe, exceed an average of from 15 to 20 souls per square mile, a large portion of these are, in consequence, forced from

their homes to wander about India and the adjacent countries in search of any means of gaining their living which may present itself. This insufficiency can be attributed to no lack of industry upon the part of its inhabitants, for a more hard-working race than that of the Pathans does not exist, as is well known to our engineers and contractors in India, who are mainly dependent upon them for the execution of any work involving exceptional laboriousness, such as works of excavation and embankment. No greater proof of the difficulties to be encountered in many parts of this country in all agricultural operations as well as of the patient and laborious efforts of the population to overcome them, could be presented than the existence of such works as are locally termed karezes, that is, subterranean watercourses constructed for the transmission of a stream from some spring to a site selected for cultivation. These are constructed by sinking a well at some spot, at the base of a hill generally, where a subterranean spring has been ascertained to exist, and again digging a line of wells along the interval between this and the selected spot; the bottoms of these are then connected by channels scooped through the intervening soil, and the water from the spring is thus conveyed along the whole distance in a subterranean channel, where it is protected from any loss or waste which might ensue from evaporation consequent upon exposure to the sun, or from other causes. As, owing to the irregularities of the ground, it is frequently necessary to conduct these channels for several miles by circuitous routes through gravelly or even rocky soil in order to bring them out exactly at the selected spot, it is easy to see that the labour involved is enormous, and such that nothing but a spirit of the most dogged and patient industry on the part of the population would have undertaken. These latter qualities are, however, as

much a characteristic of the Affghan population as sterility and every natural disadvantage are that of their native land. What astonishes every visitor to the latter is that such a miserable country should produce such a fine race of men; for there, bred upon a diet of little more than cakes made of coarse grain with a little butter and very rarely a piece of meat, may be seen great stalwart figures with thews and muscles that would rival those of an English navvy. The fact, however, of the splendid physique which is the general characteristic of the lower classes here may rather be explained upon the theory of the "survival of the fittest," than by any special attributes of the soil or climate, for nothing but a combination of the strongest constitution and physique could possibly withstand the trials which here await it from its earliest childhood.

The fact is that, taken as a whole, this country never has produced more food-supplies than the amount absolutely required for its own existant population, and very frequently these also are deficient, and a considerable portion of the population is compelled in consequence to wander forth in search of a living throughout the neighbouring countries. That it never will produce much more than it does now is a matter which may also most probably be taken for granted; for in such parts as the soil and the nature of the surface of the ground admits of cultivation, there being no rainfall to depend upon, such works are limited to the amount of water available from springs and streams and rivers for the purpose of irrigation, and the industry of the population has availed itself of this to the utmost extent possible, even at the cost, in many cases, of almost incredible labour. Enough has been said to shew that from the carrying out of such a measure as the occupation of the more favourable positions even of *Afghanistan*, we could anticipate no actual com-

mercial profit which would accrue to us, while by endeavouring to persuade ourselves to the contrary we shall only lay up for ourselves a future harvest of failure and disappointment; the most we could expect from such a step would be by a very careful system of administration the defrayment of the actual expenses of such an occupation.

Amongst the various districts constituting the country of Affghanistan, that of Cabul has for some hundreds of years held the first place as being the seat of the most powerful and influential Affghan tribe of the country, and occupying a position particularly inaccessible to an invader; the valley, moreover, over which it extends, is one peculiarly fertile for the country; thus, owing to these advantages, it is the point which would always form the centre of opposition to an invading force, and one round which all Affghans would always rally for a last struggle; for the same reason it is one from the successful occupation of which by an invader all organized opposition on the part of the remainder of the inhabitants of the country would collapse.

The district of Candahar comes next in importance to that of Cabul; for, though a far more extensive and fertile one than the former, and though the city from which it takes its name is the great entrepôt for Central Asian traffic with India, it has never formed more than an appanage of the Ameer of Cabul, and that only so long as he possessed funds and forces to retain it; for owing to its defenceless position, and to its very wealth, which has made it an object of avarice to neighbouring powers, it has never been able to maintain its independence for any prolonged period, but has fallen a prey to every invader, and been included more than once within the boundaries of Persia. Its population, however, is strictly Pathan in origin, though speaking a dialect different from that of

Cabul. It offers far superior advantages to the former place for the location of European troops, both as regards supplies and a strategical position, for being situate half way between Herat and the frontier of India, it has always formed a resting-place for invading armies, whether advancing from the east or the west, where they could repose and recruit themselves previous to continuing their progress; it is, indeed, the only halting-place on this line of march, for the supplies obtainable in the Quetta district are quite inadequate to the support of any army of formidable dimensions, and from the mere fact of its occupation in any force an enemy would be completely debarred from moving either way, for on either side of it the country is of so sterile and waterless a description that nothing more than a force of comparatively insignificant dimensions could advance through it at a time. Though it is a mistake to look upon Candahar as forming an integral portion of the country which we call Affghanistan, for, as I have explained, it has never formed more than an appanage of the throne of Cabul—still, by its alienation or occupation by a foreign Power, the position of the ruler of Cabul would be much affected, both as regards prestige and finances; but then the influence of the latter over most of the tribes of Affghanistan is, as I have shown, of so vague and precarious a description, that a question of this kind is hardly worth considering. One thing, however, is certain, and that is, that the loss of prestige and popularity which he would suffer by his acquiescence in the location of a European force in Affghan territory, would far outvie any financial loss which he might sustain by the forcible and permanent occupation of the Candahar district, and that the introduction by him of a European force within his dominions would be the signal for his speedy downfall. Under the present circum-

stances, as we have adopted the fiction of the Amir of Cabul being the responsible ruler of the region called by us Affghanistan, and persisted in treating with him as such, the only means by which we could secure a position in Candahar without absolutely ruining his position with his fellow-countrymen, would be to make a demonstration of breaking from him and occupying the place by force of arms; we might then offer him any additional subsidy which we thought advisable as a compensation for the loss of its revenues. Such a proceeding also appears to me to be the only satisfactory way of establishing ourselves there, for the great mistake which we made during the last war in Affghanistan was that, while holding the country and maintaining order by sheer force of arms, as regards the districts of Candahar, at any rate, we abandoned the population to the tender mercies of there own civil governors. Under these circumstances, how could our presence there be other than an utter abomination to the inhabitants, for they had to endure the presence of the hated infidel amongst them without deriving any of the reputed benefits of his rule?—nay, rather the injury done to them by our presence, appeared to them aggravated a thousandfold by the fact that we were there as the supporters of their own native rulers in every sort of rapacity and extortion; not that I mean that any such measures were for a moment countenanced by the responsible European authorities, but that every Asiatic official is by nature rapacious and extortionate, and only looks upon his term of office as a period in which to accumulate, by hook or crook, the greatest amount of treasure possible, the only check to his rapacity being the limits of endurance of the population under his charge. Such a man, finding himself supported by an irresistible foreign force, would naturally think it

throwing away the goods which Providence had put in his way, did he neglect his opportunity. The constant complaint of the unfortunate inhabitants of the Candahar districts during our late occupation, as they were oppressed and squeezed by their native rulers whom we set up was "The accursed Feringhi is here, but where is the boasted clemency of his rule? If we are to be subjected to the exactions of our own rulers, let it be at all events without the support of the bayonets of the Infidel" It is not to be wondered at then, that the moment they saw a chance they rose against us as one man, and that on our departure no more trace was left of our presence than if we had never been there. There is no doubt that it always has been, and always will be, a bitter thing for an Affghan population to have to submit to European rule, and to tolerate the presence of a European force amongst them; and the only thing that will ever reconcile them to our presence is the reputed mildness and clemency of our sway To give them, however, the full advantages of this, it will be necessary that the entire administration of any position or district which we occupy should be entrusted to European officers. By working upon their avarice and internal dissensions we may obtain a position amongst them, and, by ensuring them a just and impartial administration, we may, after some years, *with tact and* judgment, secure one which will be based more upon their own appreciation of the benefits of our rule than, as hitherto, upon the mere presence and support of our bayonets

The Affghan tribes do not, however, as has been pointed out, by any means constitute the whole of the inhabitants of the regions to which we have given the collective name of Afghanistan, for interspersed with these tribes dwell large numbers of Hazaras or Moguls, the descendants of

the followers of Jenghez Khan or Tamerlane. These tribes inhabit the regions north and west of Candahar; they live in a state of perpetual feud with their Affghan neighbours, from whom they differ in many characteristics, notably as regards fanacticism and vindictiveness; they are possessed by no fanatical hatred to a European as an infidel, and do not consider it a point of honour to perpetuate a feud; they are also less treacherous, though equally avaricious, and perhaps not quite so brave. Altogether, they are of a more malleable nature than the Affghans, and as there are large numbers of them in the country their presence might, in the event of our advancing our position, on account of their traditional hostility to the Affghans, be turned to valuable account, by our organizing large bodies of them into local police or levies, which could be easily done with a little tact and judgment. They are, of course, like all the tribes of these parts, a wild and ignorant people, unaccustomed to any sort of discipline, and jealous of any control; but officered by men of experience and judgment, who knew when to tighten, and when to slacken, the rein they would be of most valuable assistance, for the purpose of the protection of outposts, and the lines of communication, for their devotion to a European, whenever they do attach themselves to one, is most affecting. The other inhabitants of these regions are principally tribes of Persian origin, who have wandered thither, or been introduced by different invaders and conquerors of the country.

VII.—HERAT.

As to the occupation by us of the district of Herat, even if we had the forces available to place a permanent

garrison in this city and along the lines of communication, the maintenance of such a force at a point so distant from its base and through a country where we should have to be mainly dependent upon that base for supplies, would constitute such a drain upon our Indian finances as would place it almost beyond our means, if only from a financial point of view; indeed, it is a question whether it is not a measure which is equally impracticable to us from a practical point of view as regarding the amount of transport and supplies which we should require to convey thither a force of the requisite strength, and maintain it there in a condition of due efficiency. To begin with, the only *raison d'être* of any such a garrison of ours in Herat would be to prevent an anticipated Russian occupation of the district, and no Russian General would think of attempting such an undertaking with a force of less than about 20,000 men, duly equipped with artillery and siege-train, &c. On our part we could not expect to render the Affghan population any material assistance in their opposition to the invader, with a force of less than 5,000 to 10,000 men; to keep open communication with Quetta would necessitate the posting along the 500 miles intervening between this place and Herat a force of about 5,000 men, for the attitude of the population in these parts could never be depended upon in an emergency, as was sufficiently demonstrated in the interval between the battles of Maiwand and Candahar, when the very stations upon our line of rail were menaced by bodies of marauders, and there was not a single post throughout the whole length of our line of communications which was not threatened or attacked in many places in localities where the population appeared devoted to us, and it had been years since any sort of disturbance had occurred. In addition to this it would be necessary to locate a force of about 5,000 men in the Candahar district to replace casualties a

supply reliefs, so that altogether we should not give ourselves a chance of attaining our object with a force of less than 15,000 to 20,000 men, while to place ourselves beyond all possibility of failure, a force of at least double this strength would be required.

Let us first consider the difficulties of transport alone to be encountered in conveying to Herat a force of, say 7.000 men. Experience has shewn us that, in these regions, where frequently for very long distances the local food supplies are very limited and cannot be depended upon to any sensible degree in the conduct of military operations, the amount of transport requisite to convey any given force of the mixed arms, including tent equipage and the convoys of commissariat supplies, and ammunition and military stores, required to provide men and animals alike with proper sustenance during their march, and to maintain the whole in a due state of efficiency, amounts, roughly speaking, to about one camel for each combatant unit of the force employed. In making this estimate special notice should be taken of the fact that the unit of transport to which it has reference is that of a camel, an animal peculiarly adapted to the climate and conditions of existence in these regions, amidst the peculiar and scanty vegetation of which it can, under the most disadvantageous circumstances, find a sustenance which it would be impossible to depend upon in the case of any other beast of draught or burden, and that consequently in this case it is assumed that the transport employed would carry exclusively the supplies required for the men and animals composing the force, being itself dependant for its sustenance upon the forage it could pick up *en route*. Were any other species of transport employed a very much larger proportion of mules or bullocks, as the case might be, would be required in order that these animals themselves might

carry with them a sufficient amount of food to keep them in an efficient condition, so that the total amount of bullocks or mules required for the purpose in question, would amount to, from 15,000 to 20,000, the carrying capacities of either being about equal; that is less than half a camel-load, which may be taken at about three to four hundredweight. It must be remembered, again, with reference to this estimate that it is based upon the requirements of a march from the Indus to Candahar, which is a distance of only about 300 miles, whereas that between Quetta and Herat is over 500 miles, but this would not really involve the necessity of any large extra amount of transport, as fresh supplies would be procurable *en route* in Candahar to take the place of those consumed on the way thither, and the force would thus be able to start thence on its march across the 300 miles lying between that place and Herat with its full allowance of supplies

How utterly helpless any force is in these regions, if not supplied with a requisite amount of transport, has been amply demonstrated by the failure of General Phayre's force in its attempt to reach Candahar after the battle of Maiwand, and that in spite of the most strenuous efforts on the part of the Government, and the unwearied exertions of its energetic commander, and indeed of every individual officer employed. The spectacle presented would have been ludicrous in the extreme had it not been for the disastrous consequences to human life, which accompanied it in the fatal climate, in which it took place. There, at the very hottest season of the year, in the place then constituting the railway terminus, which has always had the reputation of being the hottest spot in that part of India even, were shot out day after day on the sands of the desert, hundreds and hundreds of troops who were compelled to move on forthwith at all cost to get out of the fearful climate they were thus stranded in, and to

make room for others, but with no other transport available to convey the stores and supplies which were absolutely indispensable to them over the 100 miles of desert and rocky passes intervening between the railway terminus and Quetta, which after all was only the rendezvous and base for the intended operations, but a limited number of raw ponies and bullocks, which for the most part had never had a load upon their backs before; for these, then, constituted the only transport procurable throughout India, and to collect even them money had been poured out like water. Day after day these troops struggled up the Bolan Pass to Quetta, where they arrived in what indeed might be called the lightest of light marching order, their equipage being limited to the clothes they had upon their backs, and their ammunition to the contents of their pouches, while the whole line of march was strewn with the baggage and equipage they had been obliged to abandon upon the way, a welcome prey to the wandering Belooches, who appeared shortly afterwards looking so respectable in the suits they had made for themselves out of the tents and blankets that they were perfectly unrecognisable, and there was not a camping-ground where, in the case of the European troops, they did not leave several of their number dead or dying from sunstroke or exhaustion. And when they arrived at Quetta they had only the disappointment of finding that the very deficiency which had caused their previous experiences to be so miserable would prevent their continuing their march or accomplishing the object with which they had struggled so far.

No sooner, moreover, had these reinforcements arrived at Quetta than it became apparent that the food supplies stored up there or procurable in the neighbourhood were totally inadequate to their maintenance. Upon the occurrence of the battle of Maiwand, when Government were at their wits' end how to obtain transport for the

troops which were intended to relieve Candahar from this side, hundreds upon hundreds of bullock-carts were manufactured in India and sent up to work between the Railway terminus at Sibi and Quetta, and it was upon these that the troops in the latter place were mainly dependent for their supplies; upon calculating, however, the amount that could be forwarded regularly by these, it was found that, on the assumption that no supplies of grain or forage were procurable to any reliable extent, locally between these two points, a pair of draught-bullocks would in the course of their transit consume about half as much again in weight of grain and forage as they would draw,—that is that, the distance being 100 miles divided into about 10 stages each constituting a day's march, and the food allowance of a bullock being about 6 lbs. of grain and 20 lbs of grass per day, the actual amount of food which a pair of bullocks would have had to convey with them for their own consumption *en route* would have amounted in weight to about 500 lbs or half as much again as the weight they were calculated to draw, which was fixed at 350 lbs The despair of the commissariat authorities at the result of this calculation may be imagined, fortunately some local supplies, which though of an inferior description, answered their immediate purpose in this emergency, were rendered available, and the difficulty was thus overcome

The dearth of transport in this emergency may best be estimated by the rates of carriage demanded by the local camel-owners for the conveyance of stores between Sibi and Quetta which rose to about 15s. per cwt. and upwards; as a great part of the camels were able to carry about five hundredweight the cost of the two trips represented about the value of the animal employed; while of the deficiency of all food supplies some idea

may be formed from the fact that the local prices of grass and grain rose respectively to upwards of £14 a ton and 12s. a bushel respectively, which in a country where money is scarce amount to worse than famine prices. Since then, the difficulties of transport over this particular extent of our lines of communication have been to a great degree overcome by the construction of a line of rail which now traverses a great part of the distance intervening between Sibi and Quetta, but beyond this latter place there still remains the same difficulty of providing with transport and supplies a force intended to proceed to Herat.

Admitting that the transport available in India has recovered to a considerable extent from the disastrous effects of the last Affghan war; when upwards of 50,000 camels perished upon our frontier, exclusive of countless ponies and bullocks, till the breed of camels became almost extinct in many places, and the prices of ponies rose after the termination of the war to nearly four and five times what it had been before its commencement—still I think we should find some considerable difficulty in mustering the number required to convey our intended force to Herat; the number, moreover, thathas been mentioned, namely, about 7,000 to 10,000 camels would be required for the mere conveyance of the troops with the indispensable accessories of tent-equipage, military stores, and a sufficient amount of commissariat supplies for their sustenance, it being assumed that on their arrival at their destination they would be able to provide for themselves locally, with such supplies of the latter nature as they might require; for the conveyance of such stores or supplies as should subsequently become necessary to maintain our troops there in an efficient condition we should then be—as we were throughout the late Affghan war—mainly dependent upon local transport in the hands of the

various tribes inhabiting the districts bordering upon our lines of communication. This transport is limited, and being the monopoly of the tribes in question, is always unreliable, at any time of particular emergency it is as likely as not to be withheld with a view to obtaining higher rates for carriage; the owners, moreover, of this local transport are of an independent character, and would be most reluctant to bind themselves to any sort agreement to us. The only way in which our advance in force to Herat would be practicable would be by stocking the various camping-grounds on the route thither from Candahar with the necessary supplies and sending on such a force by comparatively small detachments, but such an operation would require months of previous preparation in order to accumulate along the line of march the required amount of these necessaries, while it would not obviate the expense and difficulty of maintaining a constant supply of the same and of other indispensable stores

It appears, then, that however much politicians and theorists may rave about the vital importance of not allowing Herat—"The Key of India" as they call it, though on what particular grounds they assign it this reputation no one seems able to explain very satisfactorily — to fall into the hands of a foreign power, such a measure as that of occupying it ourselves, which is the only means by which we could actually prevent such a contingency—there being no middle course open to us, in as much as any opposition that could be offered by the inhabitants of the district with the assistance of a few British officers and a handful of Indian troops would be merely contemptible to a Russian force of any strength—would be a measure extremely difficult for us to carry out from a practical point of view, if not absolutely beyond our power. Instead, then, of

wasting our time and money and efforts upon fruitless negotiations and subsidies and boundary commissions, we had better reconcile ourselves to the fact that if Russia be bent upon continuning her advance upon the western frontier of Affghanistan as far as Herat, there is but little we can do in these regions to arrest it, unless we are prepared to make tremendous sacrifices, and saddle ourselves with a burden which will be a perpetual drain upon our Indian finances. If it be deemed of absolutely vital importance to arrest her progress, the only means by which such an object could be attained would be by attacking her interests in some other quarter, and thus compelling her to relinquish her views in these regions, for the time being at any rate; if, however, it be considered that the respective interests of the two nations are not so irreconcilably opposed to one another in the matter, but that it would be possible for their frontiers to meet here, the most simple and advantageous solution of the difficulty would be by coming to a compromise with her for the mutual occupation of Herat and Candahar by herself and us respectively. There is no further objection to a measure of such a nature in the case of Affghanistan than there was in the case of Poland, or in numbers of similar cases in which two great Powers have found themselves compelled to absorb a smaller power placed between them to prevent the perpetual annoyance and uneasiness which must inevitably accrue to either of them from the intrigues in which it must be perpetually engaged in its struggles to maintain its position, while any sentiment upon the subject would be entirely thrown away, as it has been shewn that even in that portion of the regions to which we have given the collective designation of Affghanistan which can with any shew of reason lay claim to this title as

constituting the special abode of the Afghans, these latter exist divided into different tribes without any sort of tie or bond between them, whilst beyond these limits they are so much in the minority or so closely intermingled with other races that they cannot be considered to represent to any appreciable degree the local population. As to the district of Herat, it is only a comparatively recent acquisition of the Amir of Cabul's, having previously been included for the greater part of its history within the limits of Persia; its inhabitants, moreover, are all more or less of Persian origin, and have the greatest aversion to the brutality and oppression of Afghan rule, from which they would gladly free themselves, their special ambition being to constitute an independent State of their own. With reference to our own position in Candahar, the interests of the inhabitants of the districts that would be thus occupied by us, could not but derive every possible advantage from the establishment amongst them of a settled Government replacing the present disorganised and distracted state of things, while as to the inclinations of the savage and barbarous remainder, it is not reasonable that such should for a moment be allowed to form any obstacle to the interests of two great civilised powers, such as England and Russia.

It is a popular craze that a Russian occupation of Herat would only be a prelude to an immediate invasion of India from that quarter, but it is most improbable that she really entertains any such a wild idea, though some of her more enthusiastic military officers may have expressed an opinion that it was a feasible one, or even gone so far as to draw up a scheme for its execution. This is a point regarding which we can best console ourselves, and most effectually set our minds at rest by a consideration of the difficulties we should have to encounter, and the expense we should have to incur in our prosecution of the far

simpler enterprise of despatching a force in the contrary direction, for whatever applies to us on this score regarding the movements of troops in these quarters at distances comparatively so trifling from our base of operations, which moreover is in a country abounding in every species of resources, would apply with tenfold force to a Russian army moving in the opposite direction at enormous distances from its base, and with that base, too, in a poorly-cultivated and semi-subjugated country. It may be taken for granted that the Russians have had too much experience of the difficulties and dangers of encountering barbarous tribes under these circumstances, to think of engaging with a civilized foe upon such terms.

It cannot be too clearly understood that the importance of a Russian move on to Herat as affecting our interests, depends entirely on the fact of whether we make a similar move on to Candahar or no ourselves, if we do so any possible ill effects of the Russian move are completely neutralised; if we do not, the whole of the country of Affghanistan would fall under Russian influence in course of time, and our frontier position, nay even our very hold of India would be shaken, and that not so much from any possible hostile measures of the Russians themselves, as from the fact that in India we occupy the position of a mere handful of foreigners holding in check by the effect of our prestige and moral influence the most varied and antagonistic interests, and that the unopposed presence and adverse influence of a rival power so near our possessions would unsettle the minds of the more turbulent nationalities inhabiting various portions of the country, and set the numerous restless and disaffected spirits with which India abounds on the watch to turn this feeling of unsettledness to their own advantage.

An occupation of Candahar has this advantage that it is a move distinctly within our means, and one which

could be carried out at a few days' notice almost, while the district which we should thus occupy is separated from Herat by 300 miles of a country of such a barren and waterless description that it may be considered as absolutely untraversible by European troops encumbered with artillery and baggage, except in comparatively small numbers such as could be utterly destroyed in detail by a very small force posted on the Helmund. The intervening country between the two positions would thus constitute a zone of neutral territory which would separate the outposts of the rival interests more effectually than any river or range of mountains; and this would not be the case were we to take up our position in Herat, for there we could not fail to find ourselves being continually entangled in all sorts of complications, and drawn into all sorts of difficulties at every disadvantage to ourselves on account of our distance there from our base for supplies and reinforcements.

It appears, then, that the occupation of Herat by ourselves would be an enterprise of extreme difficulty to us whilst the maintenance of the districts intervening between the present positions of Russia and ourselves respectively as a neutral territory would, in the case of a country such as Affghanistan where under the mere shadow of a responsible Government are comprised races of the most varied nationalities and conflicting interests, containing amongst themselves every element of discord and disunion, and constituting a very hotbed of intrigue and every possible complication—be a measure leading only to perpetual complications and consequent sources of irritation between the two countries.

There remains, then, as has been pointed out, but two courses of policy for us to pursue, either with the aid of a European or other ally to put a stop to Russia's designs in these regions by an attack upon her interests

the troops composing it had left Cabul till the time of their arrival at Candahar, they were with the exception of the British outpost at Khelat-i-Ghilzie completely cut off from all communication with the outside world. Such a state of things could never occur in the event of our making an advance to Herat, for it would then be absolutely necessary for our existence there, that we should maintain a long and expensive line of communications with India, through a barren and more or less ill-disposed, if not, actually hostile country.

Nothing, indeed, could be more contrasted to the advantages thus presented in the case of the march from Cabul to Candahar than the position of a force required to march from Quetta to Herat, or in the opposite direction, the climate in these regions situated as they are, mostly at a very low level would except in the cold weather that is between the months of November and March be extremely trying, as far as heat and dust and glare are concerned, it would probably have the advantage of most parts of Egypt in these respects, though it would not be quite so hot as the Soudan; the water supply would be extremely deficient, and in many places, even where procurable, would be hardly drinkable on account of the minerals held in solution in it which would only be got rid of by evaporation, if even then completely, further, with the exception of the Candahar district, which is, as it were, an oasis in the desert, the regions intervening between the Peshoen Valley and Herat are of a peculiarly unproductive and sterile character, consisting for the most part of waterless and sandy plains at an altitude of little more than from 2,000 to 3,000 feet above the sea-level where the heat during the one season of the year, is as excessive as is t[illegible] cold during the other; nature indeed appea[illegible] districts, from the heaviness of the

irregularity of its surface, which is broken by innumerable deep ravines, as well as by the above-mentioned characteristics of climate and physical attributes, to offer every possible opposition to the movement through them of troops and material of war.

Again, in the event of our making a movement on Herat, it would no longer be the case with us that it was in 1880, when we had thousands of war-proved soldiers, and an unlimited transport at our disposal to pick from, for we should now have to start afresh with troops necessarily out of condition by the interval of some years of an easy life in cantonments, whilst the transport required would actually have to be collected, organised and trained anew.

* * * *

Amongst a certain class of Russophobists, it is a fixed idea that in the case of the occupation of Herat, by Russia, one of the most formidable weapons with which she would assail us in India would be the Affghan population, armed, trained, and disciplined by herself, just as amongst the military enthusiasts in Russia, who are advocates of an invasion of India, it is a dogma that the Mohammedan population of this country are only awaiting a demonstration on their part, sufficiently near to our frontier, to rise against us *en masse*; but these ideas are alike delusions, and dictated only by a view of the state of affairs, as much too pessimist on the one side as it is too sanguine upon the other. Whatever may be the personal objection of the Affghan population to the presence of an infidel force amongst them, if they were reduced to the alternative of acquiescing in the admission into their country, of either an English one or a Russian one, there is not a man amongst them that would hesitate to throw in his lot, heart and soul, with us, against the latter; while as to the Mohammedan population of India,

not only are the discordant units, of which it is composed utterly incapable of amalgamation for any sort of common enterprise, but the mass of them, in common with that of their Hindoo and other fellow-subjects, are far too well aware of the ease and comfort which they enjoy under the present *regime* to have the remotest inclination to change it for another, much less for such an one as Russia would offer them.

There is no particular creed or community amongst the population of India, that entertains seditious or disloyal views *towards our rule.* The classes amongst which such feelings are most rife are those which we are educating to look forward to a time when they may relieve the European officials of a great portion of the work of administration of the country, and into whose minds we are perpetually instilling the fact that the prestige and moral influence to which we owe our supremacy amongst them, are traditions of bygone and barbarous times, and as such, *not* adapted to the present civilized epoch. These have been but too ready to lend their ears to such suggestions, and already begun to look upon our presence in the country at all as a grievance, and our exercise of authority amongst them as a usurpation of their own rights From these we shall have trouble enough in time; the only consolation is that, however much the ideas which we have suggested to them, and which they themselves are now labouring to their utmost *to spread* generally amongst all classes and races *of the native* population, may weaken or *prejudice* our position in the country; being mainly derived from castes *of peaceful* instincts, such as the mercantile and *writer castes, in* any time of disturbance, so far from *exercising any influence* or having their views consulted *in any way, they* would meet with but very *little mercy from the warlike* castes of their respective *communities.*

irregularity of its surface, which is broken by innumerable deep ravines, as well as by the above-mentioned characteristics of climate and physical attributes, to offer every possible opposition to the movement through them of troops and material of war.

Again, in the event of our making a movement on Herat, it would no longer be the case with us that it was in 1880, when we had thousands of war-proved soldiers, and an unlimited transport at our disposal to pick from, for we should now have to start afresh with troops necessarily out of condition by the interval of some years of an easy life in cantonments, whilst the transport required would actually have to be collected, organised and trained anew.

*   *   *   *

Amongst a certain class of Russophobists, it is a fixed idea that in the case of the occupation of Herat, by Russia, one of the most formidable weapons with which she would assail us in India would be the Affghan population, armed, trained, and disciplined by herself, just as amongst the military enthusiasts in Russia, who are advocates of an invasion of India, it is a dogma that the Mohammedan population of this country are only awaiting a demonstration on their part, sufficiently near to our frontier, to rise against us *en masse*; but these ideas are alike delusions, and dictated only by a view of the state of affairs, as much too pessimist on the one side as it is too sanguine upon the other. Whatever may be the personal objection of the Affghan population to the presence of an infidel force amongst them, if they were reduced to the alternative of acquiescing in the admission into their country, of either an English one or a Russian one, there is not a man amongst them that would hesitate to throw in his lot, heart and soul, with us, against the latter; while as to the Mohammedan population of India,

emissaries, but it will be from the fruits of our own inconceivable folly and weakness in voluntarily abdicating the position of superiority amongst the population which we have held ever since we entered the country, and to which we owe entirely the maintenance of our supremacy therein. Any one who has had sufficient experience of Asiatics to understand their train of thought will know that what is termed politically a "conciliatory policy" towards its subject is the most fatal one that could be adopted by a ruling power, especially if, as in the case of our position in India, it constitutes an infinitesimal minority amongst the local population, for to their minds it conveys no impression but that of weakness. Tyranny and every sort of oppression they are used to from their own native rulers, and they appreciate fully the benefit of strict justice but anything beyond this is more than they can comprehend. Of no people could the familiar proverb that "Familiarity breeds contempt" be spoken with greater justice as regards our dealings with them; so long as we do not cheapen ourselves in their eyes they will continue towards us the respect that they have been accustomed to regard us with hitherto, but if we keep on dinning in their ears that they are in every respect our equals, they will end by believing it, and then failing to see under these circumstances, by what process of reasoning we can claim any right to our presence in the country they will intrigue to relieve themselves of it

So long as the maudlin sentiments of "India for the Natives" and "England's Mission in India" are the cry of our English politicians, the Russians have no occasion to hurry on their preparations for an invasion of the country, did they contemplate such a measure, for they have only to await the natural course of events, and then walk in without opposition, and so long as the Bengal Baboo, and the Bombay Brahmin are petted

pampered, and encouraged in their pretensions by us, as they are now, and the Native Press is allowed its present license, there will be no occasion for Russia to put herself to any expense for the purpose of sending emissaries to stir up discontent and sedition in the country, for this is all being done for her at our cost, and under our immediate patronage.

We may not have the same qualities of amalgamating ourselves with our Asiatic fellow-subjects as the Russians have, and it is not owing to the possession or exercise of such that we owe the position which we have obtained, and might still hold, amongst them, but of this I am convinced that in no part of the Asiatic possessions of Russia will a spectacle be exhibited similar to that which may be seen any day, and in the most remote districts of India; indeed, according to the present lines upon which our civilization of the country and education of its inhabitants are based, it may be said that the more uncivilized the district, and the more uneducated its inhabitants, the more marked the spectacle, and that is that of a solitary English official separated by miles and miles from his nearest fellow countryman exercising the most unlimited influence and unquestioned control over an extent of country perhaps as large, if not larger, than an English county, and containing quite as large a population.

Our national position in the country depends upon that of each one of our individual representatives. It remains to be seen how far this is being strengthened, or the contrary, by our present internal policy.

C. E. BIDDULPH, M.A.,

Bombay Uncovenanted Civil Service.

Waterlow Bros. & Layton, Printers, 24, Birchin Lane, London, E.C.